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Women and Gender in Colonial Contexts

Paris, January 19-21, 2012

Université Paris -- 1 Panthéon Sorbonne (Cemaf et Centre d'Histoire du XIXe siècle), Ecole Normale Supérieure, Lyon (LARHRA), and the New York University (Paris).



For decades, colonizing was perceived and analysed as a masculine undertaking. This is probably why historians of colonisation (and decolonisation) -- who themselves were mostly men -- paid little attention to the study of women, of gender relations, or of how gender identities and sexualities were constructed in colonial contexts. Women were seen as negligible actors in colonial wars (both during or after the conquest), even though they were important actors within and victims of such conflicts. Moreover, as primary agents of the European "civilising mission," whose alleged principles were to "educate, cure, moralise and convert," women -- both colonisers and the colonized -- took part in the process of national assertion and of colonial domination. Last but not least, the colonial process created -- and was constantly reshaped by -- tensions as well as new forms of racial or social hierarchies and gender roles. Thus, the "colonial making of gender" proved to be a powerful vector of social transformation, both in metropolises and in colonies, as recent stimulating historical research has demonstrated.

The International conference on "Women and Gender in Colonial Contexts" seeks to assess the current state of historical research on this subject in a longue durée perspective, i.e., from the late 18th-early 19th centuries to the decolonisations of Asia, Africa, and the South Sea Islands (second half of the 20th century). Participants are welcome to present research focusing on specific colonial contexts, both in terms of time and space. At the same time, studies of women's experiences or of gender construction through a comparative perspective -- between colonies or Empires -- is strongly encouraged, as it will allow a better understanding of local versus global situations.

The Conference will also offer a significant opportunity to explore new sources, new approaches and new historiographical trends (notably through the combination of various epistemological tendencies such as micro-history, social history, subaltern studies, post-colonial studies or gender studies), in order to show the vitality of this field of research. The organisers encourage scholars to

submit papers that investigate, within the framework drawn up by the Conference title, relevant aspects of the following: politics and policies, work, religion, education, health, family, mobilities, sexualities, body/bodies, war, slavery, violence, masculinities.

Proposals in French or English (300 words) should be sent by June 15, 2010, to: christelle.taraud@wanadoo.fr. Please attach a short CV stating your institutional affiliation.

Contexts and Backgrounds: policies and practices of national and cultural identity and diversity (incl. exceptionalism); belonging and citizenship; the Political Left in Latin America as opportunity or peril; activities and goals of social movements in favor of or opposed to transnationalism; human rights in the transnational Americas; migration; transnational flows of capital, goods, and labor; the economic and social impact of transnationalism; transnational crime, narco-traffic; changing urban spaces: ghettoization, gated communities, transborder metropolitan areas; identitarian spaces: diasporic communities, long-distance nationalism, enclaves; the Caribbean as a special case/laboratory of transnationalism; political, economic, social, cultural approaches to internal and national borders; obstacles to inter-American cooperation.

Negotiations: negotiations of national (and other) identities in literature, music, the arts, performance; the geopolitics of knowledge; cultural imperialism; brain drain; transnational media (policies), New Media; lifestyles, sexuality, and everyday practices in the context of transnationalism; transborder feminism; the continuing impact of coloniality; the postcolonial condition; processes of creolization, hybridization, mestizaje.

Abstracts for 30-minute papers (in English or in Spanish) or proposals for two-hour panels (usually with three papers per panel, possibly also with a respondent) should be sent to conference@interamericanstudies.net by April 30, 2010. Information at: http://www.interamericanstudies.net/?page_id=312.